Message from the Secretary of State
Jesse White

Secretary of State and Illinois State Archivist Jesse White poses with a picture of James A. Rose, who had been the longest serving Secretary of State in Illinois until Secretary White broke his record. The John Daly Conference Room in the Margaret Cross Norton Building is home to a portrait gallery of previous Secretaries of State.

June 2021

Dear Friend:

This year marks the 100th Anniversary of the Illinois State Archives. I am pleased to present this publication as one of the many ways my office is commemorating this significant event. As Secretary of State and State Archivist, it has been an honor to be a part of the Archives’ long tradition of service to state government and the people of Illinois.

In many respects, the Secretary of State has always been the State Archivist. Under the first State Constitution, this office was designated as custodian of the official records of the Governor and the General Assembly.

Through the years, those record-keeping duties expanded, with the highlight being the 1921 legislation that created an official Archives Division under the Secretary of State’s office. In the 100 years since then, the Archives has literally gone from storing records in the basement of the state Capitol to storing records in the “cloud.” And, since 1938, it has operated out of the Margaret Cross Norton Building on the Capitol Complex.

Many people assume that an archive is only concerned with the past, but as State Archivist, I look forward to the future of the Illinois State Archives. It is my hope that its next 100 years will be as productive and fruitful as its first 100 years.

Sincerely,

Jesse White, Secretary of State
and State Archivist
An Act to amend Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 12 of "An Act to revise the law in relation to the state library," approved February 25, 1874, in force July 1, 1874, as amended.

Section 1. Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly: Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 12 of "An Act to revise the law in relation to the state library," approved February 25, 1874, in force July 1, 1874, as amended, are amended to read as follows:

Section 1. The Secretary of State shall be librarian of the state library, and shall have the direction and control thereof. He may make and enforce such rules and regulations in relation to the care, arrangement and use of books, maps, charts, papers, furniture and other things belonging to the state library as he may deem proper.

Section 2. He shall establish in the state library a General Library Division, a Library Extension Division, an Archives Division, and such other divisions as he may deem necessary or advisable. The heads of

Enrolled Law 18305, which was passed by the General Assembly in 1921, established the State Archives.
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Prior to the construction of the State Archives Building, the state kept many of its records in the basement of the Capitol Building. Environmental issues such as dirt floors, water and humidity were found to cause damage to valuable records.
THE ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES is the official depository for permanent state government records. A permanent record is defined as one that no longer has immediate use for the agency that created it but which has long-term legal, administrative, historical or other research value.

Although the State Archives was not officially founded until 1921, its origins may be traced to the Illinois territorial period, which began in 1809 when Illinois was separated from the Indiana Territory. The Secretary of the Territory became the custodian of the Governor’s records. When Illinois became a state in 1818, the now Secretary of State became custodian of both the Governor’s records and the General Assembly’s records.

During the early years of state government, records were neither numerous nor complex. When the state capital moved from Kaskaskia to Vandalia in 1820, Elias Kent Kane was the Secretary of State. As keeper of the state’s records, he was responsible for moving them safely to the new location. Secretary Kane assigned the chore to his cousin Sidney Breese (who went on to become a state Supreme Court Justice and a U.S. Senator). Breese loaded the records onto an oxcart driven by a slave, and together, they traveled across nearly 100 miles of wilderness. It took them a week to make the 100-mile trip. This would not be the first move for the state’s permanent records. In 1839, the state capital moved from Vandalia to Springfield. Once again, the Secretary of State’s office transported the records by wagon to the new location.

In 1873, the Secretary of State’s office established a Division of Archives and Indexes. The purpose of this division was to collect, arrange and index the records of the Secretary of State’s office and the General Assembly. Gradually, the work of filing correspondence, recording election returns, and publishing session laws and legislative journals engrossed most of the division’s time and attention. Consequently, it failed to develop as an archival unit, and the word “archives” was dropped from its title. It continues today as the Index Department.

In 1921, the General Assembly passed legislation creating an official State Archives Division under the Secretary of State’s office. The Secretary of State established that division within the State Library. Its purpose was to properly care for official state records that have permanent historical, legal or administrative value. Margaret Cross Norton was appointed the first supervisor of the State Archives.

Before the Illinois State Archives Building opened in 1938, the Illinois State Archives was in the Centennial (now Howlett) Building. This photo shows the Archives in the 1930s.
WHEN MARGARET CROSS NORTON began her duties, many of the state’s valuable, historical documents were stored in the basement of the Capitol. According to Norton, the flooring “had never been paved; there were six inches of dust on the floor which sometimes was that much mud when it would rain.” Besides the unfavorable environmental conditions, rodents and bugs were also a concern. When searching for records, Norton carried a pipe so “whenever a rat came and looked at me, I’d bang on whatever was nearest with that pipe and scare him off.” Fortunately for Norton, she did not have to work in these conditions for long.

In June 1923, the Archives Division set up shop in the newly opened Centennial Building (now known as the Howlett Building). However, these quarters had limited storage space and few environmental safeguards for the records, and soon proved to be inadequate. The problem of suitable storage space for records was a matter of acute concern to Illinois state officials for many years, especially after 1925, when the State Archives was given authority to accept records from all state officials.

On Feb. 8, 1934, the Illinois State Arsenal Building burned to the ground. In addition to the complete loss of the building, the files of the Military Department’s War Records Division were destroyed. With the loss of soldiers’ bonus and World War I records stored in the State Arsenal and the inadequate archival quarters for the state’s other permanent records, the need for a better home for the state’s records became apparent.

At the 1935 session of the General Assembly, Secretary of State Edward J. Hughes promoted a bill requesting funds for the erection of a State Archives Building. The bill passed, and the state appropriated a half-million dollars for the new structure. The federal Public Works Administration added an additional $320,000. Ground was broken for the new building on
March 30, 1936. The building was completed two years later in 1938.

Norton was very vocal about the exact specifications that would be the building we know today. She designed it based on the design of the recently built Maryland Hall of Records. The building has 12 floors that house the state’s records. Each floor, except those with administrative offices, consists of separate vaults on the north, east, south and west sides of the building. The vaults are secured by steel doors that are fireproof and locked 24/7.

Within the vaults are bays that have a letter and number associated with them. These letters and numbers assist in locating the records that are stored there. To ensure the safety of the documents from the harsh effects of the sun and outside elements, the vaults have no windows and all lighting is artificial.

With the amount of weight the records create, extra support was needed to ensure that the building would not collapse under the immense pressure. To assist with the weight, the building was built with caissons that are sunk 35 feet to bedrock and with beams that are 72 inches in width. In addition to ensuring the building could handle the weight of the documents stored and ensuring the safety of the documents from outside elements, the building was also designed to be fireproof.

Because of these specific features, the Illinois State Archives Building served as a backup location to house National Archives documents in the event of an attack during World War II. As Norton put it, “From the angle of safety there is probably no better building in the State of Illinois than the Archives Building.”
WHEN THE ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES BUILDING was completed in 1938, Director Margaret Cross Norton needed to fill the building with records. She also needed a way to build relationships with other state agencies and to establish the Archives as a trusted repository for their records.

One way that Norton accomplished this goal was by incorporating departmental vaults as part of the new building. The idea behind the vaults was that agencies could store semi-current records in the building and have access to those records as needed. Records were considered semi-current if they needed to be removed from the building for departmental use occasionally and were between 3 and 10 years old. Non-current records were typically older than 10 years, were seldom used and were subject to absolute custody of the Archives.

The stacks in the Margaret Cross Norton Building are divided into four vaults: north, south, east and west. The south side of the building was designed to hold permanent records held by the State Archives. No one but Archives staff had permission to access that part of the stacks, which were securely locked. The north, east and west vaults were designed as departmental vaults. These vaults were locked, and each row of shelving (or bay) was behind an iron mesh cage. Agencies storing records in those vaults could access them by requesting a key to that specific cage door at the reference desk. As the stacks filled up and more storage space was needed for permanent records, the Archives moved away from designating areas as departmental vaults, and agencies removed their non-permanent records from the building.

In 1956, the Archives opened its first State Records Center (SRC), providing agencies a place to store their semi-current records. Today, only a few non-permanent records from state agencies remain in the Norton Building. The cages from the departmental vaults still exist though, delineating this previous system of storage.

Departmental vault records are maintained in “cages” that have a lock. Each “cage” has its own key to help ensure the safety of the records.
Special shelves are used to store older books as to not allow weight on the spine. Metal filing cabinets are used for records that are stored in file folders.
THE OPERATIONS SECTION of the Illinois State Archives consists of two units, working closely together to serve the public. The Inventory Control Unit accessioned state governmental records into the Archives and provides physical control over those records. The Reference Unit provides reference services to access state governmental records holdings.

During the early years of the Illinois State Archives, these responsibilities fell under the purview of a number of different individuals, including the assistant archivist, the receiving room clerk, and filing and general clerks. Clerks often specialized in the kind of records they serviced, particularly election records and the records of the Secretary of State Corporation Department and General Assembly. The various clerks also spent a significant amount of time indexing, and the receiving room clerk operated the fumigator prior to records entering the vaults.

Today, Inventory Control staff works with the various state agencies to transfer their records to the State Archives for permanent retention as determined by the State Records Commission. Transfer sheets are completed by the agencies, a signed copy is returned to the depositing agency and the Archives keeps a signed copy to track what records the Archives holds. This unit also accessioned and stores security microfilm from state agencies and circuit court clerks for permanent storage. Staff also retrieves security microfilm requested by the depositing office.

As guardians of all of the records in its custody, the Inventory Control Unit monitors temperature and humidity levels in the stacks for irregularities and monitors walls and ceilings for water leaks or other abnormalities that may harm records. The unit ensures that all doors in the stacks are securely locked and that all filing cabinets are secure and in proper working order. The stacks are generally closed to anyone outside of the Operations Section.

In addition to maintaining a record of what records the Archives possesses, the Inventory Control Unit keeps track of where those records are located in the building. An archive does not operate like a library with a standardized classification system. In an archive, records from different creators, in varying formats and with vastly different subject matter, can all be filed next to each other. With approximately 75,000 cubic feet of storage space, staff needs to meticulously document where records are stored in the building so no records go missing.

The Reference Unit is the most-public facing unit at the State Archives. Reference staff works with researchers to identify what records in the Archives’ collection can aid them in their research. The most frequent requests come from reporters, historians, genealogists, students, land surveyors, academics from all fields, the General Assembly and state agency employees. This unit is responsible for keeping records secure when in use by patrons visiting the Archives and for monitoring the reference room closely.
A view of the Illinois State Archives Reference Room, ca. 1940s.

STATE RECORDS MANAGEMENT
Before 1943, the only legal way a state agency could dispose of any of its records was to request permission from the General Assembly. The General Assembly only met for the first six months of every two years, and during this time, it would have to pass bills to allow for the disposal of records. Record disposal bills introduced in the General Assembly tended to be based more on the need for additional storage space than upon administrative purposes. In addition, some departmental disposal laws gave agencies dangerously broad powers while others were needlessly restrictive.

In 1943, the Illinois General Assembly created a State Records Commission to provide more consideration in the disposition of agency records. The commission served as an advisory body to the General Assembly and the legislature enacted disposal laws based on the commission’s recommendations. At the time of its creation, the State Records Commission consisted of the State Archivist, the State Historian, the State Librarian and, as an ex-officio member, the head of the agency of whatever agency’s records were being discussed. All recommendations had to be done by a unanimous vote, which included the vote of the head of the agency. Also, under the enacting statute, all state records had to be kept for a minimum of six years. In 1951 and again in 1953, the legislature passed bills strengthening the State Records Commission.

In 1955, the legislature authorized a records management survey that resulted in an inventory of state agency records, and made recommendations on ways to save money by implementing sound records management practices. At the urging of Secretary of State Charles Carpentier, the legislature acted quickly and passed the State Records Act of 1957. The act provided for a continuing and consistent records management program for state agencies. It expanded the membership of the State Records Commission and gave it exclusive authority for the disposition of all official state agency records.

The act also placed the Secretary of State in charge of coordinating statewide records management, naming him “State Archivist and Records Administrator.” This allowed him to operate records centers (the office had already opened a center in anticipation of the act’s passage) and to operate a centralized microfilming unit, which began in 1958. The Secretary or his designee served as chairman of the State Records Commission. The commission also consisted of the State Historian plus the designees of the Attorney General, State Treasurer, Auditor of Public Accounts and director of State Finance. The latter two positions have since been replaced by designees of the Comptroller and the director of Central Management Services.

The State Records Act applies to all agencies under the executive branch. It does not apply to the General Assembly or the Supreme Court. It originally did not apply to state universities, but they came under the act in 1983. Today, the commission meets the third Wednesday of every month in the John Daly Conference Room on the second floor of the Margaret Cross Norton Building.

LOCAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT
The success of the State Records Act of 1957 led the General Assembly to study creating a similar records management program for local units of government. The result was the 1961 Local Records Act. Once again, the legislature made the Secretary of State, as State Archivist, administrator of the act, which applied to all units of local government (municipalities, counties, townships, etc.). The act created two local government records commissions: one for Cook County and one for the other 101 counties in Illinois. Membership for the two commissions were defined in the statute and consisted of local government officials, plus the State Historian and the designee of the Secretary of State. The Governor was given the power to appoint the members of the Downstate Local Records Commission.

The act also appropriated $60,000 to start up the Local Records Management Program. Due to the size of Illinois, the Archives hired records analysts and stationed them in different regions of the state to assist the local governments with their records management programs. Today, local government field officers are located in Chicago, West Chicago, Silvis, Rantoul, Springfield and Salem.

The Downstate Local Records Commission met regularly from its inception, eventually settling on meeting on the first Tuesday of every month in the State Archives Building, now the Margaret Cross Norton Building. The Cook County Local Records Commission, as Archives Director John Daly wrote about in 1990, proved more difficult to start. The Local Records Act called upon the commission to meet at the call of the chair and, as Daly noted, “the Cook County chairman simply did not call any meetings.” Daly said that Chicago’s “otherness” was “intractable” for many years.

The lack of action with the Cook County Local Records Commission began to be alleviated in 1983, resulting in extending records management services to all public agencies in Cook County. Between Sept. 1,
1983, and March 31, 1986, Archives staff — partially funded by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission — surveyed more than half a million cubic feet of records for more than 200 public agencies in Chicago and Cook County. During this time period, staff created more than 60,000 individual record series and 475 Records Retention Schedules. The Cook County Local Records Commission now meets the second Tuesday of every month at videoconferencing centers in Chicago and Springfield.

For 60 years, the State and Local Records Acts have governed governmental records practices in Illinois. By the mid-1960s, these acts were so successful, even with the troubles of implementing the Local Records Act in Cook County, that the dean of American Archivists, Dr. Ernst Posner, wrote in 1964 that “The archives and records management program of the state of Illinois is known as one of the outstanding programs in the United States.” After 60 years, this statement is as true today as it was in 1964.
THE ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES began microfilming in 1939 when it acquired a camera to microfilm county records. Under Margaret Cross Norton’s leadership, the State Archives became a leader in what was then considered a new field for storing records. Norton quickly opened a film laboratory in its newly opened building.

However, prior to the 1957 State Records Act, many state agencies operated their own microfilming programs, meeting with mixed success and utilizing mixed standards. The 1957 State Records Act gave the State Archives the authority to establish centralized microfilming services for agencies. The Central Microfilming Unit (CMU) opened in 1958 and was placed under the Records Management Section of the State Archives. The unit eventually moved to the Secretary of State’s Data Processing Division, but in 1993, it returned to the Archives.

The CMU consolidated microfilming for the state to both save money and ensure proper standards were met. The unit began with a staff of three: a photographer trained in microfilm techniques and two camera operators. The unit provided microfilming services, reproductions from microfilm and technical advice to agencies. Both user and backup microfilm copies were made, and both long-term and permanent records were filmed.

By the 1970s, CMU staff expanded to more than 30 people. The role expanded too, as it began placing records from computer cartridges to microfiche, in a process known as computer output to microfiche, or COM. Each microfiche could hold the equivalent of 325 letter-sized pages. Changes in technology led the department in 1999 to begin burning the information to compact discs rather than microfiche. In 1989, the unit set up a lab to protect the film it created using a chemical toning process. The unit also began filming local records for use at the IRADs.

Technology and needs continued to change. In 2008, the department started using Archive Writers, which receive digital data and create microfilm for permanent records. The department no longer uses COM and is phasing out the use of compact discs as a storage and transfer media. The unit operates two large planetary cameras that microfilm paper records, ledger books, maps and blueprints, and operates one overhead scanner for paper documents, ledger books and printed material. It also operates three microfilm/microfiche scanners to allow records kept on microfilm to be made available electronically to users. Finally, the department is replacing rotary cameras, which rapidly film paper records, with high-speed scanners.

James Wassell, who worked for the section from 1978 until his retirement as supervisor in 1995, provided two highlights for the section. He founded the Midwest State Micrographics Conference in 1986, and in 1963, before coming to work at the Archives, he won an Oscar for his work with film and film processing.

The CMU now consists of 12 employees. Although technology has changed, the unit continues to provide state agencies a way to reduce their paper load while ensuring that records with a historic value are permanently stored in a professional standard.
A view of the Illinois State Archives micrographics lab, ca. 1950s.
THE ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES, as part of its records management program, provides state agencies free storage and retrieval services for long-term but non-permanent records. The Archives achieves this by operating a State Records Center (SRC).

Before the construction of the State Archives Building in 1938, every state agency was responsible for storing its own non-permanent records. At this time, agencies kept daily operational records in their offices or found off-site storage. These off-site storage facilities were generally not secure or fireproof.

One result of the 1934 State Arsenal fire was the construction of the current Archives Building, which is designed to be fireproof. Although built to house only permanent state records, the new building had plenty of storage space, so Norton allowed state agencies to store non-permanent records there as well. This gave agencies secure storage areas. Space that the Archives Division had occupied in the Centennial (Howlett) Building also was retained for the storage of non-permanent records. Most of the records retained there were for vehicle titles and driver’s licenses.

The State Records Act of 1957 allowed the Illinois Secretary of State to “establish, maintain, and operate records centers for the storage, care, and servicing of records of State agencies.” In anticipation of passage of the act, in 1956 the Archives opened its first SRC. It was located at 111 East Monroe Street, across from the Capitol, in a building now occupied by the Secretary of State’s Index Department. The Archives would later lease space in ammunition storage bunkers located at an abandoned munitions manufacturing site in Illiopolis, about 20 miles east of Springfield.

George Evers was the first supervisor for the SRC and is credited, along with Robert Hartley, for developing a box numbering system to assist staff in retrieving state agency records housed at the SRC.

In 1973, the Archives leased space on Klein Street, near downtown Springfield, and moved the records from the Illiopolis location to this facility. The records center would move several more times before moving in 2000 to its current location at 3765 Winchester Road on Springfield’s east side. This facility provided for controlled access, a secure processing area and administrative offices. The ceilings at the new facility are 26 feet tall and allow for greater use of vertical storage. The new SRC had shelving space for 144,000 cubic feet of records, roughly twice the storage space as at the Margaret Cross Norton Building downtown. In 2013, the amount of shelving space increased to 153,600, and the following year, it was increased to 163,200 cubic feet of storage space.

As of the end of 2020, the SRC has storage space for 162,117 cubic feet of material, of which just over 120,000 cubic feet is in use. Currently, 129 different state agencies store their long-term but non-permanent records free of charge at the SRC.
State Records Center Timeline

1956 – The first State Records Center (SRC) opens on the second floor of the Old Power Plant, 107 East Monroe in Springfield, with a storage capacity of 18,510 cubic feet. The state’s Finance Department made the first deposit, which consisted of 532 cubic feet of records.

1961 – The first floor of the Old Power Plant becomes available, and storage capacity increases to 35,954 cubic feet.

1965 – Two underground ammunition bunkers are rented in Illiopolis for records storage, which brings total storage capacity to 37,554 cubic feet.

1973 – The Secretary of State’s office leases a building on Klein Street in Springfield with a capacity of 4,500 cubic feet. Records stored at the Illiopolis site are moved to the new Klein Street location.

1974 – One of the storage areas at the Old Power Plant closes, and 4,090 cubic feet of records are moved to the Klein Street facility.

These two moves actually reduced the SRC’s storage capacity from more than 40,000 to 36,000 cubic feet.

1976 – The SRC relocates to West Dorlan Avenue on Springfield’s near northwest side, which increases storage capacity to 46,486 cubic feet. However, records are still split between the Old Power Plant location and the new Dorlan Avenue site.

1977 – The State Archives leases a modern warehouse facility on Old Rochester Road on Springfield’s far eastside. Records are moved from the Dorlan facility to the new site, and the remaining records housed at the Old Power Plant are gradually moved to the new site as well.

1981 – For the first time since 1965, all SRC holdings are held in one facility. The 15,000-square-foot warehouse on Old Rochester Road has the capacity of 52,000 cubic feet of records storage.

1984 – The SRC once again outgrows its facility and a new facility opens at 3701 Winchester Road in Springfield. The new facility has 30,000 square feet of floor space, and the taller ceilings allows for a storage capacity of almost 100,000 cubic feet. The facility also provides better security than at the previous facility and has a fire sprinkler system, loading docks for convenient access and a more efficient heating system.

1993 – After 18 months of data entry, the SRC establishes an automated tracking and locator system.

2000 – The SRC relocates to its current facility at 3765 Winchester Road. The previous building had reached near capacity with some 90,000 cubic feet of records. This facility is capable of housing 144,000 cubic feet of records and includes additional space for expansion. It contains all new shelving that extends 22 feet high.

2013-2014 – The SRC adds more shelving space, increasing its storage capacity to approximately 163,000 cubic feet of boxed records. As of the end of 2020, just under 120,000 cubic feet is in use.
THE ILLINOIS REGIONAL ARCHIVES DEPOSITORY (IRAD) SYSTEM, established in 1976, is a program that identifies, collects, preserves and maintains the records of local government agencies with permanent administrative, legal, historical or other research value. It provides archival services to local government agencies, publishes finding aids for IRAD record holdings, and provides reference services through a network of seven regional depositories located on Illinois university campuses.

In 1961, the Local Records Act established a statewide records management program for local governments administered by the Illinois State Archives. The act also gave statutory authority to the Illinois State Archivist to “accept for deposit in the State Archives or regional depositories official . . . records of every description of counties, municipal corporations, political subdivisions and courts of this State, when such materials are deemed by the Archivist to have sufficient historical or other value to warrant their continued preservation by the State of Illinois.”

In 1974, planning and development for a regional depository system began. Public universities were chosen to serve as the network of depositories because they were ideal environments for research, could accommodate the volume and diversity of the local government records for their specific geographic region, provide a ready source of staff conducive to handling the records (graduate student interns majoring in political science, history or other closely related fields), and were easily accessible by the public.

In 1975, the IRAD System received initial funding from a two-year grant of $211,800 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Agreements were made between the Office of the Secretary of State and six state universities that provided the initial framework for the regional depository system. The six universities were Eastern Illinois, Illinois State, Northern Illinois, Sangamon State (now known as the University of Illinois at Springfield), Southern Illinois and Western Illinois.

Each university agreed to provide secure storage space, public access for the records of its geographic area (ranging from 14 to 23 contiguous counties), graduate students to work as interns and a staff member to serve as an on-campus supervisor. The Illinois State Archives agreed to administer the program, including locating and transferring archival records to each depository, training graduate student interns to staff the depositories, and paying the graduate students’ salaries.

In the spring of 1976, the first graduate student interns were chosen, and by August of that year, the IRAD System began targeting the records of local...
government agencies to house at the depositories. Cook County and the City of Chicago did not participate in the program at this time. After expiration of the initial two-year grant period in 1978, the system became fully funded through the Office of the Secretary of State. In October 1990, Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago became the seventh regional depository in the IRAD System. It houses local government records for Cook County and the City of Chicago.

Since its inception in 1976, the IRAD System’s collection policy has resulted in the accession of approximately 6,000 cubic feet of records, 3,475 linear feet of bound volumes and 19,400 reels of microfilm. All records transferred into the IRAD System retain the chain of custody and full legal value.

Local government agencies that have transferred records to IRAD include counties, townships, municipalities, school districts and special districts. Types of records in the collection include county board proceedings files and meeting minutes; records of births, deaths and marriages; land records; naturalization records; probate records; court case files (civil and criminal), chancery cases (including divorces), and other court records; coroners’ inquest records and files; township records; municipal records; school records; and other miscellaneous county records.

The IRAD published the finding aid *A Guide to County Records in the Illinois Regional Archives* in 1983. Published information and updated finding aids regarding the entire IRAD records holdings can now be found online at the Illinois State Archives website.

Although IRAD record holdings are non-circulating, these historical records provide an important link to Illinois’ past and are available to genealogists, researchers, government employees, attorneys and the general public. Researchers can utilize the IRAD System by visiting a depository in person or via telephone or mail requests.
A MAIN FUNCTION OF ANY ARCHIVES is the repair of damaged documents so that these documents may be preserved and used. Over the course of 100 years, however, the ways documents have been mended has changed.

Although the Illinois State Archives has had a “restoration laboratory” since its building opened in 1938, according to a 1946 Illinois Libraries article written by Margaret Cross Norton, for many years the repair of manuscripts was assigned to various clerks, with the clerk who received the documents generally doing the repair. Today, two professional conservators work in the second floor conservation lab.

The conservation lab is an essential aspect to the long-term care of documents stored within the Illinois State Archives. Many of the documents that staff works on are in bad shape due to how they were stored at their previous agency. Many were folded, stored in areas with no climate control, stored in metal drawers allowing rust to take hold, or exposed to water allowing mold to grow.

Conservation staff must use proven techniques to stabilize damaged documents and to help prevent any future issues from arising. The goal of all conservators is to use techniques to protect a document but which can be undone later if necessary, as conservation technology improves and conservation theory changes.

An example of how conservation techniques have changed since the Archives opened is that crepeline, a silk-like material pasted to the backs of documents, is no longer used. Crepeline would stiffen a document, allowing it to more safely be handled. The risk of this method was the paste attracted bugs and caused the paper to become brittle to the point of cracking. It was also very difficult to reverse. In phasing out the use of this method in the 1940s, Norton also noted, “Though we found this method satisfactory in many ways, it requires considerable skill, is messy to work with (and so generally unpopular with staff), and is not permanent.”

The Archives changed this as a method of preservation with the Barrow Laminator, a machine that used cellulose acetate and heat to apply a lamination to brittle documents. This provided the documents with stability and a longer life span. It also allowed a large number of documents to be conserved in a smaller time period. However, this method again suffered from issues of documents becoming brittle and yellowing.

Current conservation techniques include using hydration chambers to relax paper fibers, using archival quality paste and mending tissue to reattach broken paper fragments, and encapsulating documents to provide stability for safe handling. For severely damaged documents needing repair, the conservators at the Illinois State Archives use Japanese mending tissue made from plant fibers. The tissue is applied to damaged documents using a wheat starch paste mixed with distilled water. This method provides stability to a document but more importantly allows the repairs to be removed if technology again changes or if unanticipated problems arise from the long-term use of this method.
Archive conservator Betty Hill uses the Barrow Laminator in 1971. This method of preserving documents is no longer used today.

The Barrow Laminator, ca. 1940s.
THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD (ISHRAB) serves as a state-level review body for grant proposals filed by Illinois archival institutions with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). The NHPRC is the grant-making arm of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The ISHRAB also serves coterminously as the Illinois State Archives Advisory Board (ISAAB).

Former Director of the State Archives John Daly put it best when he would explain this by saying, “It’s like alphabet soup with all these acronyms.”

In 1975, NARA created the outline for a closer partnership between the National Archives and the states. Specifically, NARA called for the creation of a State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) in each state to assist the NHPRC in reviewing federal grants. These boards also were to provide leadership to archival repositories within a state. NARA asked the Governors from all 50 states to establish SHRABs. Although the initial duties of the different SHRABs were similar, each state structured its SHRAB differently.

The Illinois SHRAB was formed in 1975, with member appointments made by the Governor. The ISHRAB receives support services from the staff of the Illinois State Archives including the State Archives director, who serves as board coordinator. Since 1985, the ISHRAB also serves concurrently as the Illinois State Archives Advisory Board.

By statute, the ISHRAB consists of a member of the State Records Commission; a member of a Local Records Commission; a member of a local historical society or museum; a university archivist; a person in the education profession specializing in either history or political science; a genealogist; a research or reference librarian; a business archivist; the director of the State Library; the state historian; and four public members.

Today, the ISHRAB maintains an online archival repositories directory, offers training scholarships to Illinois archivists and grants to small Illinois archival institutions, publishes an informative newsletter three times a year, publicizes Archives Month (October) activities, and advocates on behalf of archival issues. Funding for these programs comes from the Illinois Secretary of State’s office and the NHPRC.

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### 2020-2021 ISHRAB

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The ISHRAB/ISAAB meets three times a year, with two meetings held in Chicago and one in Springfield. Here, the board meets with Secretary of State and State Archivist Jesse White following its May 2018 meeting.

The Illinois State Archives Advisory Board and the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board are coterminous boards that provide leadership and guidance to both the State Archives and archives repositories in Illinois. In 2020 due to COVID-19, the board met by teleconference.
THE CORE FUNCTION OF THE PUBLICATIONS SECTION is to provide intellectual access to the Illinois State Archives' holdings. This is accomplished by properly arranging and describing state government records and creating guides to better orient researchers with the Archives' holdings. Originally, this task was done by the archivist (the head of the Archives Department), the assistant archivist and the cataloger. As with any archive, the use and style of finding aids has changed since its inception.

When the Illinois State Archives was established in 1921, record description and cataloging were largely experimental processes, rather than standardized methods. In fact, Margaret Cross Norton created a cataloging system for archives in Illinois to use but abandoned that system a few years later.

During its early years, the Archives used a dictionary catalog, similar to a library catalog, to list its holdings. It supplemented those descriptions with calendars, indexes and “analyticals.” In the 1940s, the Archives began work on a general name index, in which all names appearing in State Archives' documents prior to 1850 could be searched. The simple but tedious process yielded great results, and the name index is still consulted frequently today by staff, genealogists and family historians.

As the holdings of the Illinois State Archives grew, description of collections was largely done at the series level. In 1975, the Archives took on the task of conducting a thorough inventory of its holdings, and in 1978, the Archives published its first Descriptive Inventory of the Archives of the State of Illinois. In addition to the standard title, creator, dates and quantities information, the 708-page guide also provided administrative histories of record creators, series descriptions of the records, cross-references to other materials in the Archives' holdings and any restriction statements. The Archives published a supplement to the Descriptive Inventory in 1985 and a complete second edition in 1995.

As with any published catalog, the Descriptive Inventories became outdated almost as soon as they were published. In 2012, the Publications Section spearheaded a project to move the Descriptive Inventory online, using an archival information management system called Archon, created at the University of Illinois. Archives staff can make changes and updates to Archon that are viewable to the public instantly. In addition, Archon is searchable by keyword and subject, links directly to online resources, and is freely available to researchers all over the world.

Other duties of the Publications Section have included creating teaching packets featuring copies of records held by the Archives on a given topic and producing pamphlets, brochures and posters related to research at the Illinois State Archives and the IRAD. The Publications Section also issues a newsletter on behalf of the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board called For the Record. The newsletter began in 1975 and has been an online publication since 2015. Published three times a year, its February issue is devoted to listing records accessioned into the Archives and regional depositories during the previous year.
ALTHOUGH THE ILLINOIS STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY (ISGS) is not a state agency, pursuant to statute (5 ILCS 160/7 (9)), the Office of the Secretary of State works closely with it and provides an office location at the Margaret Cross Norton Building. The Illinois State Archives is proud of the close relationship it has with the ISGS.

The ISGS was formed in 1968 through the cooperative effort of representatives from different local Illinois genealogical societies. Capitalizing on the excitement of the state’s 1968 sesquicentennial, they created a statewide organization designed to promote an interest in the people who contributed to the development of Illinois. The ISGS’s first president, Lowell Volkel, was an employee of the State Archives, and the ISGS named its highest award, the Volkel Medal of Honor, after him.

The society preserves and makes available data pertaining to individuals, families and groups who lived in Illinois. It seeks to inform people about the value of preserving family and local history and to encourage and support local and regional genealogical societies.

ISGS’s governing board includes ex-officio members from the Office of the Secretary of State, the Illinois State Archives and the Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) System. The Illinois State Archives director and IRAD representative provide the ISGS with quarterly/annual reports.

The ISGS assists the Illinois State Archives in many ways. The ISGS provides volunteers for various archival projects, such as indexing vital records and historical record series collections, and promotes Illinois State Archives’ programs through its website and publications. It has also provided funding for the purchase of microfilmed county records and for equipment used at the various IRAD facilities.

Lowell Volkel (left), an employee of the Illinois State Archives, was one of the founding members of the Illinois State Genealogical Society in 1968 and served as its first president.
Directors of the State Archives

THE ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES has had five directors since its establishment as a division under the Secretary of State’s office. The Society of American Archivists (SAA) named two of those directors, Margaret Cross Norton and John Daly, as two of the top 50 archivists in American history when it celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2011.

MARGARET CROSS NORTON served as the first supervisor of the Illinois State Archives. She was born in Rockford and worked at the Indiana State Library and the State Historical Society of Missouri before coming to work at the Archives. Secretary of State Louis Emmerson appointed her supervisor of the State Archives on April 1, 1922, and she served as supervisor — a position later called director — until Jan. 1, 1957. She officially retired from the Archives on April 15, 1957. As archivist, Norton was famous for exploring the nooks and crannies of the state Capitol looking for old records. With her hair tied up, wearing a black smock and armed with a large lead pipe “to discourage rats,” she discovered enrolled laws amidst cigarette butts underneath the Capitol’s east steps and found the official 1818 territorial census, which had been required for Illinois to achieve statehood, in a dusty sixth floor attic. During the height of the Depression, Norton led the effort to give the State Archives its own building. In 1938, the State Archives Building, constructed largely to her specifications, opened on the Capitol Complex. It was only the third government building built specifically to house government archives. In 1995, the building was named in Norton’s honor. In 1936, Norton helped found the Illinois Department of Archives. In 1995, the building was named after him. As archivist, Norton was famous for exploring the nooks and crannies of the state Capitol looking for old records. With her hair tied up, wearing a black smock and armed with a large lead pipe “to discourage rats,” she discovered enrolled laws amidst cigarette butts underneath the Capitol’s east steps and found the official 1818 territorial census, which had been required for Illinois to achieve statehood, in a dusty sixth floor attic. During the height of the Depression, Norton led the effort to give the State Archives its own building. In 1938, the State Archives Building, constructed largely to her specifications, opened on the Capitol Complex. It was only the third government building built specifically to house government archives. In 1995, the building was named in Norton’s honor. In 1936, Norton helped found the State Archives. Depuy came to the Archives in the early 1950s from Pennsylvania, where he had conducted historical research on the Pennsylvania prison system. At the Archives, he served as a records management liaison, helping to draft and implement the 1957 State Records Act and organizing the Records Management Unit. He was appointed director on Jan. 1, 1957. He left the Archives in the summer of 1958 and returned to Pennsylvania to assist the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in creating a comprehensive statewide records management program. In 1960, he published the influential article “Archivists and Records Managers – A Partnership” in the American Archivist.

THEODORE CASSADY succeeded Depuy as director of the State Archives on Oct. 14, 1958. He served as director until Jan. 15, 1974. An attorney, Cassady worked for the Archives for 12 years prior to his appointment, including 10 years as assistant to Margaret Cross Norton. During his time as director, Cassady further implemented the 1957 State Records Act and wrote and implemented the 1961 Local Records Act, which created both the Downstate Local Records Commission and the Cook County Local Records Commission. He was named an SAA Fellow in 1968.

JOHN DALY became the state’s fourth director of the State Archives in 1974, following a national search. Daly came to the Archives after serving 11 years at the Philadelphia City Archives. As director, he created the first Descriptive Inventory of the holdings of the Illinois State Archives and developed the Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) System. Under his watch, the state also conducted the first records inventory of the City of Chicago, discovering hundreds of records that had previously been thought to have been lost in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The Archives and John Daly earned several awards during his tenure, including the Waldo Gifford Leland Certificate of Commendation, the Society of American Archivists Distinguished Service Award, the C. F. W. Coker Award, and the Philip M. Hamer and Elizabeth Hamer Kegan Award. Daly was named an SAA Fellow in 1981. He retired in 2004. In 2008, the conference room in the Margaret Cross Norton Building was named after him.

DAVID JOENS succeeded Daly as director of the Illinois State Archives on Sept. 1, 2004. Before coming to the Archives, Joens had worked for two of the three branches of state government, as well as in the state university system and as a newspaper reporter. As director, he has sought to professionalize staff, modernize the micrographics department, expand the state records center and increase grant funding to the State Archives. He has worked to increase the role of the State Archives and the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board (ISHRAB) in providing leadership and guidance to archival institutions in Illinois, including by implementing grant programs to small Illinois archival institutions, providing scholarships for training Illinois archivists and offering training from State Archives staff.
Margaret Cross Norton served as the first supervisor of the State Archives from 1922 to 1957.

Leroy Depuy served as the second director of the State Archives from 1957 to 1958.

Theodore Cassady served as the third director of the State Archives from 1958 to 1974.

John Daly was the fourth director of the State Archives and served from 1974 to 2004.

David Joens (left), current director of the State Archives, and David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, with a picture of Margaret Cross Norton, 2015.

Secretary of State and State Archivist Jesse White, 2021.

Secretary of State Louis Emmerson, 1921.
THE ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES BUILDING was completed in 1938 with the last names of 25 people engraved around the top. The 23 men and two women represent individuals who have ties to Illinois and who made contributions to the cultural, social, educational, political and economic development of both the state and nation. The State Board of Art Advisors, which in 1936 acted in an advisory capacity to the State Department of Public Works and Buildings, selected the individuals. All of the honorees were deceased before the building opened.

The following names are engraved on the Norton Building, starting at the northeast corner and going counter clockwise.

**JOHN AARON RAWLINS** (1831-1869)
Rawlins was born and practiced law in Galena. In 1861, he joined the Union Army at the request of his fellow townsman Ulysses S. Grant. He was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers in 1863 and was made chief of staff of the Union Army in March 1865. When Grant became President in March 1869, Rawlins became his secretary of war but died that same year.

**JULIUS ROSENWALD** (1862-1932)
Rosenwald was a successful clothing retailer when he invested in the mail-order business Sears, Roebuck and Co. He was well known for his philanthropy, especially for his efforts toward the advancement of African Americans. His endowment fund helped construct more than 5,000 schools in 15 southern states. In Chicago, he established the Museum of Science and Industry.

**JANE ADDAMS** (1860-1935)
Addams won worldwide recognition as a pioneer social worker in America, as a feminist promoting women’s suffrage and for her efforts to promote world peace. Born Laura Jane Addams in Cedarville, Illinois, she received a college degree in Rockford. In 1889, she and Ellen Gates Starr opened Hull House in Chicago to help recently arrived immigrants. In 1931, Addams became the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

**JULIA CLIFFORD LATHROP** (1858-1932)
Lathrop was born in Rockford and studied law in her father’s office after graduating from Vassar. In 1890, she went to Chicago to join Hull House, a social service settlement, where she lived and worked for 22 years. In 1893, she was the first woman appointed to the Illinois Board of Charities, and she advocated for reforms such as the separation of patients who required different types of care and the appointment of female doctors for patients who were women. In 1899, she lead a campaign in Illinois to establish the world’s first juvenile court.

**JOHN CRERAR** (1827-1889)
Crerar came to Chicago in 1862 to run a company that manufactured and dealt railroad supplies. He became wealthy and gave much of his fortune away during his life. Crerar left an endowment for a free public library, which opened in 1897. The John Crerar Library is now affiliated with the University of Chicago.

**JOHN MILTON HAY** (1838-1905)
Born in Indiana but partially schooled in Illinois, Hay practiced law in Springfield before becoming secretary to President Lincoln in 1861. He served in several government positions, including ambassador to Great Britain and U.S. Secretary of State. He and John G. Nicolay authored an extensive biography of Lincoln in 1890.

**VICTOR FREMONT LAWSON** (1850-1925)
Born in Chicago, Lawson took over the Daily News in 1876 and created an independent newspaper devoted to factual reporting. He created many newspaper innovations, such as America's first foreign news service, and became the founder and first president of the Associated Press.

**WALTER LOOMIS NEWBERRY** (1804-1868)
Newberry was a businessman and merchant who came to Chicago in 1833, and became wealthy through investments in banking and real estate. A collector of books, he left a large portion of his estate for the creation of a public library on the North Side of Chicago. Created in 1887, the Newberry Library has become a world-class reference repository of books, manuscripts, maps and other printed materials.

**THEODORE CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH THOMAS** (1835-1905)
A self-taught violinist, Thomas was born in Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1845. After playing with the New York Philharmonic, he created his own orchestra, which toured the United States for 20 years, bringing classical music to people who had never heard it while attempting to educate listeners by combining both light and more serious pieces into his performances. In 1891, he created what became the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and later promoted the construction of Orchestra Hall.
ADLAI E. STEVENSON I (1835-1914)
Stevenson was born in Kentucky, but his family moved to Bloomington in 1852 where he eventually became a lawyer and Democratic politician. He was twice elected and twice defeated to a seat in the U.S. Congress and became Vice President of the United States from 1893 to 1897. He later lost elections for Vice President and Illinois Governor.

OTTO LEOPOLD SCHMIDT (1863-1935)
Schmidt was born in Chicago and became a prominent physician. He was a promoter of historical studies and served as president of the Chicago Historical Society and the Illinois State Historical Society. He was also the chairman of the Illinois Centennial Commission.

JOHN DEERE (1804-1886)
Deere was born in Vermont and moved to Grand Detour, Illinois, in 1836, where he worked as a blacksmith and designed and manufactured the first self-scouring steel plow. This invention revolutionized farming on the prairie and was the basis for the John Deere Company that still exists in Moline.

GUSTAVUS FRANKLIN SWIFT (1839-1903)
Swift was born in Massachusetts. In 1875, he came to Chicago and earned his fortune by organizing the large-scale slaughter and processing of cattle in the Midwest and shipping its products to East Coast population centers via refrigerated railroad cars. The innovations adopted by Swift played a vital role in establishing the modern American business system, with an emphasis on mass production, functional specialization, managerial expertise and national distribution networks.

JOHN ALEXANDER McCLERNAND (1812-1900)
McClenbrand was born in Kentucky but raised in Shawneetown. He became an attorney in 1832. He served as a Democrat in the Illinois House for three terms and then was elected to Congress six times. In 1861, he resigned from Congress to accept a commission as brigadier general of volunteers for service in the Civil War. He returned to the practice of law, and in 1870, he was elected a circuit court judge. In 1876, he presided over the Democratic National Convention.

JOHN TODD (1750-1782)
Todd was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. He settled in Kentucky in 1776 and represented Kentucky County in the Virginia House of Delegates. He joined George Rogers Clark’s 1778 expedition to capture Kaskaskia and Vincennes from the British. Virginia Gov. Patrick Henry appointed Todd the first commandant of Illinois County in December 1778. Todd returned to the Virginia House of Delegates as Kentucky’s representative during the 1780-1781 session. Todd was killed by Native Americans at the battle fought at the Blue Licks in Kentucky on Aug. 19, 1782. He was the granduncle of Mary Todd Lincoln.

EDMUND JANES JAMES (1855-1925)
James was born in Jacksonville, Illinois, and after receiving his doctorate in Germany, he worked in several Illinois schools. In 1902, he became president of Northwestern University and helped create the business school. As president of the University of Illinois from 1904 to 1920, he was instrumental in transforming it into one of the leading universities in the United States.

JOHN PETER ALTGELD (1847-1902)
Altgeld was born in Germany and came to the United States as an infant. He enlisted in the Union Army, and after the Civil War, he became a teacher, lawyer and real estate investor. Moving to Chicago, he became active in the Democratic Party and served as a judge. When elected Illinois Governor in 1892, he embarked on a program of reform, which included the improvement of the conditions of prisons and factories and the promotion of higher education. His most controversial act as Governor was pardoning the three remaining anarchists who had been sentenced to life in prison for the Haymarket bombing in 1886.

DANIEL HUDSON BURNHAM (1846-1912)
Born in New York, Burnham was raised and educated in Chicago. In 1873, Burnham formed a partnership with John Wellborn Root who produced many famous structures in Chicago. In 1893, he supervised the layout and construction of the World’s Columbian Exposition, and in 1909, he and Edward Bennett prepared The Plan for Chicago, which is considered the nation’s first example of a comprehensive urban planning document. Burnham is often remember for saying, “Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably will not themselves be realized.”

NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY (1879-1931)
Lindsay was born in Springfield, and after studying medicine and art, he believed his life’s calling was poetry. For many years, he traveled around the country trading his poems for food and shelter and later was referred to as the “Prairie Troubadour.” He wrote about war, Lincoln and his hometown. Because of his use of sound in works such as “The Congo,” he is considered the father of modern lyrical poetry.

GEORGE MORTIMER PULLMAN (1831-1897)
Pullman was born in New York and moved to Chicago in 1855. He soon became wealthy from building sleeping and dining cars for railroads. In 1880, he built a new factory and the town of Pullman for its workers on the southern edge of Chicago. During the
depression of 1894, his failure to lower rents, utility charges and products led his workers to launch a strike that eventually forced the Pullman Company to divest ownership in the town, which was then annexed to Chicago.

PHILIP DANFORTH ARMOUR (1832-1901)
Armour was born in New York and became prosperous in the California Gold Rush before becoming a wholesale grocer in Wisconsin. Moving to Chicago in 1875, Armour & Co. was the first company to produce canned meat and also one of the first to employ an “assembly-line” technique in its factories. Known for using every part of slaughtered animals, Armour famously declared that from hogs he made use of “everything but the squeal.” In 1893, he donated $1 million to found the Armour Institute of Technology, which evolved into the Illinois Institute of Technology.

WILLIAM RAINNEY HARPER (1856-1906)
Harper was born in Ohio and was considered an academic prodigy, enrolling in college at age 10 and receiving his Ph.D. at age 17. He was a Semitic languages scholar and teacher and was named the first president of the University of Chicago in 1891. He was as an organizational genius and innovative leader who is credited for creating the prototype of the modern American university. In 1967, the new community college in Palatine, Illinois, was named William Rainey Harper College.

PETER CARTWRIGHT (1785-1872)
Cartwright was born in Virginia and raised in Kentucky where he became a Methodist minister. He moved to Illinois in 1824. Rev. Cartwright promoted Methodist education and helped found McKendree College, MacMurray College and Illinois Wesleyan University. He was also active in politics, twice elected to the Illinois General Assembly but losing his bid for Congress in 1846, when he was defeated by Abraham Lincoln.

MELVILLE ELIJAH STONE (1848-1929)
Stone was born in Illinois and was a reporter when he founded the 1876 “penny paper,” the Chicago Daily News. While serving as a Chicago bank president in 1893, Stone became general manager of the reorganized Associated Press, which under his direction became a prominent international news agency.

JOSEPH MEDILL (1823-1899)
Joseph Medill was born in Canada and grew up in Ohio, where he became a newspaper publisher before moving to Chicago in 1855. That year, he purchased an interest in the Chicago Tribune. Medill was one of the founders of the Republican Party and played a central role in Abraham Lincoln’s nomination for president in 1860. Immediately after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, he told readers that the city would rise from its ashes. He was elected mayor a month later on the Fireproof Party ticket. The Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University was named for him.
Illinois State Archives Timeline

1873 – Division of Archives and Indexes is created, forerunner of the State Archives.

1921 – Illinois State Archives is established as a division of the Illinois State Library.

1922 – Margaret Cross Norton is appointed as first superintendent of the Archives.

1923 – Archives moves from the Capitol to the newly opened Centennial Building.

1926 – Margaret Cross Norton helps found the Society of American Archivists (SAA).

1936 – Ground is broken for State Archives Building.

1938 – State Archives Building construction is completed.

1957 – General Assembly passes the State Records Act.

1957 – The State Archives begins operating a micrographics section.

1957 – Leroy DePuy is appointed director of the Illinois State Archives.

1958 – Theodore Cassady is appointed director of the Illinois State Archives.

1961 – General Assembly passes the Local Records Act.

1966 – Governor Otto Kerner names Margaret Cross Norton Archivist Emerita.

1974 – John Daly is appointed director of the Illinois State Archives.

1975 – Norton on Archives is published.

1976 – Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) System begins at six state universities.

1978 – Archives publishes its first Descriptive Inventory of its holdings.

1982 – Archives receives Distinguished Service Award from SAA.

1983 – Archives receives an NHPRC grant to inventory Chicago and Cook County records.


1990 – The Cook County IRAD opens at Northeastern Illinois University.

1995 – The Illinois State Archives building is named after Margaret Cross Norton.

2004 – David Joens is appointed as director of the Illinois State Archives.

2006 – The Civil War Muster Rolls become one of the first databases placed online.

2008 – The conference room in the Archives Building is named after John Daly.

2012 – The printed Descriptive Inventory is replaced with Archon, an archival informational management system.

2014 – Jesse White becomes Illinois’ longest serving Secretary of State/State Archivist.


2018 – Archives creates an online exhibit of its 100 Most Valuable Documents.

2020 – The Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board (ISHRAB) receives the CoSA-NHPRC SHRAB Award of Merit.

2021 – The Illinois State Archives celebrates 100 years of service.